

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Elias Estabrook, and I live in New Haven, CT.

I am in support of HB 6616: An Act Concerning Expansion Of Husky Health Benefits To Those Ineligible Due To Immigration Status. Expanding access to HUSKY regardless of immigration status is an important step in ensuring our immigrant community has access to the healthcare they need. But our work doesn't end with expanding access up to age 26; we need to open access to HUSKY and healthcare to all immigrants of any age. If Connecticut wants a future that includes healthy families and a stable, thriving and growing workforce that is ready to meet the needs of our future, Connecticut must ensure that these individuals have access to health coverage.

I am a full-time worker, and I have private health insurance through my employer. I try to go to my primary care provider regularly, and I have been able to see a behavioral health provider to support my mental health. Any prescriptions I have needed only cost me \$5.00 per medication when I go to a pharmacy. Despite the fact that I am insured, I am paying off thousands of dollars in medical debt. Getting the care that you need, including in emergencies, can be expensive. As I imagine having to pay for all of the care I have received 100% out of pocket, I think about the intense stress my family and I would have experienced. I believe no one should have to live without health insurance. I am in support of the HUSKY program being expanded to all people regardless of immigration status, because I do not want to see my fellow Connecticut residents bankrupted for seeking healthcare that they need.

In 2017, I was not enrolled in health insurance that would provide me in-network access to any local hospitals or clinics. I had ear pain for several weeks that got worse and worse. It felt like my ears were swollen and I could not hear very well. It made it hard to listen actively when working with people at my job. When I tried to get care at a walk-in clinic, they told me what the out of pocket cost would be, and I could not afford to pay it. I was stressed and upset, and I wanted to find the solution to feel better.

Access to health insurance for undocumented members in my community could mean they could see primary care providers and specialists, rather than defer care until a health condition requires an emergency room visit. From a few trips I have taken to the emergency room, I know how long the wait times can be and how expensive the bills can be. Fortunately, my health insurance helped me cover a portion of those medical bills. Affordable access to behavioral health and counseling services would help everyone who needs to get support with their mental health. Mental illnesses not only take a toll on individuals, but also affect family members, friends, and communities.

I support **HB 6616** and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation. Looking forward, I ask the committee to work towards opening access to all immigrants regardless of age.

Thank you for your time,

Elias Estabrook